Thinking about home improvement? Here is a summary of requirements in The Woodlands (not all-inclusive)

Guide to Deed Restrictions in The Woodlands

The Woodlands Township is a master-planned community that provides for orderly development of residential, commercial and industrial land usage. Long-range planning is critical to preserving the quality of development and to maintaining compatibility with the environment.

Development of The Woodlands is guided by a group of legally binding covenants and design standards that protect the aesthetic integrity of the community. Additions and modifications to residential properties must be in compliance with these covenants and standards to assure continuation of good design, maintain property values and preserve the natural environment.

Residential Design Review Committees

The Covenants require that all changes and improvements to a property must be reviewed. Each developed village in The Woodlands has a Residential Design Review Committee (RDRC) made up of at least three people elected by the village residents and property owners to serve one-year terms. Committee members serve in a volunteer capacity and represent the resident viewpoint essential to the evaluation and approval process. Each village RDRC meets once a month to review property owners' applications for modifications or additions to their properties to ensure conformance with the Covenants.

The following is a brief summary for easy reference.

This summary of the protective covenants and residential standards is representative, but not all-inclusive, of those now in effect in The Woodlands. Separate standards govern non-residential projects. Since the standards are updated from time to time, it is important that residents check with The Woodlands Township for copies of the most current standards. Applications for additions and modifications will be approved on the basis of the standards in effect on the date submitted for review by the Residential Design Review Committee.

For further information about the application process, contact The Woodlands Township at 281-210-3973. Application forms for various types of projects and copies of the most up-to-date standards are available at The Woodlands Township, located at 2801 Technology Forest Boulevard, and on the Web site at www.thewoodlandstownship-tx.gov.

Summary of Standards

Fences: Some lots are restricted to a specific fence design, including those with large ponds, swimming pools or spas, on golf courses or lakes, corner lots, lots adjoining major streets, townhomes, patio homes and those in certain sections of The Woodlands.

Front yard fences, which must be of an "open" design, are limited in height depending on lot size. For most other fences, the maximum height is six feet. A single rot board no taller than six inches may be

included at the base of the fence, then the total maximum fence height is six feet six inches. The smooth side must face outward on all sides of the lot and the construction side must not be visible to adjacent streets, reserves, parks or pathways. Prohibited fencing materials include chain, chain link, wire mesh, wirebound picket, plastic, fiberglass, rope and bamboo.

Decks and other patio structures: Decks, patios, arbors, trellises, sunshades, storage sheds, gazebos and similar structures must conform to the architectural character of the existing dwelling. Easements must be observed. Gazebos, summer kitchens, patio covers and some storage sheds may also be required to respect setbacks and building lines. Please contact the Covenants Department for more detailed application information before beginning construction of these projects.

Colors and materials: Exterior painting or re-staining and roof replacement require an application and review and action by the Residential Design Review Committees, prior to installation. Changes in exterior color or material must be reviewed by the Residential Design Review Committees. This standard applies to doors, shutters, trim, and changes in siding. Limited colors and selections in muted shades are strongly encouraged. Canvas awnings and roofs must be of solid muted shades and require an application and review prior to installation.

Exterior Lighting: Due to their industrial nature, some lamp types and fixture designs are not allowed on residential lots. In general, pole lights, pedestal lights and tree lights intended to shine downward must be located at least 20 feet inward from the street pavement edge and respect all easements. Mercury-vapor lamps are acceptable only in shielded fixtures mounted high in trees to provide low level ambient property illumination (moonlight).

The level of illumination of any light should not be offensive or create a glare when viewed from outside the lot. Directional lights must be aimed into the lot on which they are installed. The light source must be shielded.

Lights mounted on buildings, poles or trees to provide general lot illumination must be mounted in fixtures that shield visibility of the lamp from the street or adjacent properties and direct the illumination upward or downward.

Play Structures: Criteria for the color, materials and placement of play equipment and structures are designed to minimize visual impact of the equipment. Basketball goals must be attached to the residence or mounted on a pole at least 20 feet from a street edge and five feet from the side lot line or no less than half way up the drive or adjacent to the dwelling or garage. Play equipment and basketball goals are not permitted on cul-de-sac islands or on the street edge.

Forts, swing sets, etc., are restricted in height, tarp color and size and must be located in the rear or side yard and not in any easement. Wood construction is preferred. Large play structures may require approval prior to installation.

Room additions, garages, and detached buildings: Please call The Woodlands Township for the Neighborhood Criteria that apply to any lot before planning a project. Special restrictions as to the percentage of a lot that may be covered by hard surface material as well as the restrictions related to the amount of square feet of living area in a given home are attached to each lot. The design of any proposed alteration must be architecturally compatible with the dwelling.

Detailed construction drawings, exterior elevation drawings and specifications for color and materials must accompany the completed application. The drawings must indicate how the proposed improvement will relate architecturally to the existing residence, and the plans must be sealed by an A.I.B.D./T.I.B.D. or N.C.B.D.C. designer, licensed architect or structural engineer. Inspections and a refundable compliance deposit are also required. Conversion of a garage or carport to some use other than for automobile storage is generally prohibited. Exceptions may be granted where an architecturally compatible approved replacement structure is provided.

Pools and spas: Pools and spas require an application and review by Residential Design Review Committees. Pools and spas must be enclosed by an approved fence with self-closing and self-latching gates. Pool barrier fencing must comply with the Residential Code. The pool and/or spa, as well as its associated decking, berms and waterfalls must not encroach upon any easement. Concrete, paving, and interlocking pavers are also limited by standards regulating lot coverage. Additionally, the water surface area is also limited by the standards. The homeowner should allow plenty of time for the application to be processed as drainage, access routes and tree-removal questions are all carefully considered. Inspections and a refundable compliance deposit are required.

Satellite dishes: A satellite dish antenna can be allowed on a lot if the dish is inconspicuous. All dishes must be black or gray in color. The removal of vegetation for signal reception is not allowed. More stringent restrictions apply to dishes more than 39 inches in diameter. Since special restrictions apply to the location of satellite dishes on a lot, please contact The Woodlands Township before a purchase is made.

Covenant Provisions

Landscaping and tree removal: In an effort to preserve the forested environment and ecological balance of The Woodlands, no tree greater than six inches in diameter may be removed without approval of the Residential Design Review Committees. Native plants are encouraged.

Pets: Residents of The Woodlands are limited in the number of animals to be kept outside the home. No more than two, either cats and/or dogs, may be kept outside. Puppies and kittens are not counted in this total until they are weaned from their mother. Animals must not be allowed to run at large, but must be confined to the owner's lot or controlled by a restraint device.

Fireworks, firearms and hunting: The sale and use of fireworks and the use or discharge of firearms of any kind whatsoever is strictly prohibited on any property within The Woodlands. Hunting of any kind and by any method is also prohibited.

Residential lot use restrictions: Without prior approval by the Residential Design Review Committee, no structure may be used for any purpose other than that for which it was originally approved. No profession or home industry may be conducted from any residential property without committee approval.

Garage, yard, and estates sales are expressly prohibited: The Woodlands Village Associations conduct a flea market twice a year in which residents may participate.

Boat, trailer and automobile parking and storage: Boats, trailers, trailer houses, recreational vehicles, truck campers, semi-truck tractors, or mobile homes, may not be parked 48 consecutive hours or more on any street or any lot, where visible at ground level from a street or adjacent property. Parking on lawns, ditches, open space areas or other dirt, gravel or grassy areas is not allowed. Motor vehicles that are disabled or mechanically inoperable on a public street may not be parked on any street or at a location where visible at ground level from any street or adjacent property.

Disposition of trash and other debris: All trash, refuse or recycling containers may be placed near the street edge no earlier than one day prior to waste collection. Emptied containers must be removed from the street, front yard or driveway by the end of the collection day. Containers must be stored on the owner's property at all times. All trash and refuse containers must be stored out of public view at ground level from the street or alley or adjacent and surrounding properties at all times except during waste collection.

No lumber, metals, bulk materials, refuse or trash may be kept, stored or allowed to accumulate on any lot or adjacent area such as greenbelts or open space areas, drainage easements, vacant lots, etc. Building materials may be stored temporarily on the premises during a construction project for a period not to exceed 120 days.

Use of easements and rights-of-way: Easements provide a buffer zone between properties to minimize the impact of one lot upon another. They are set aside for providing utility service and drainage to each lot, and to provide natural vegetative screening and privacy separations between lots. Being certain that your project respects all easements is perhaps the most compelling reason to contact The Woodlands Township before you complete your project plans.

This list is not all-inclusive. Please contact The Woodlands Township for the current standard as applicable at 281-210-3973 or visit www.thewoodlandstownship-tx.gov.